

The Sun.

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If our friends who favor us with manuscripts for publication wish to have their articles returned, they must in all cases send stamps for that purpose.

The Cabinet.

The first report or rumor of further changes in the Cabinet brings down upon the President of the United States a deluge of advice, no doubt well meant but certainly superfluous.

The case of the Secretary of State is the object of much solicitude on the part of the volunteer reorganizers of the Cabinet.

If there is anything in the multitude of affairs now pressing upon the President which should be left to his unaided wisdom, at least until he asks advice, it is the matter of the selection of his own advisers. That is peculiarly his own business. He is quite competent to attend to it.

Commutation for Stamp Taxes.

In the published reports of the new revenue bill, which was introduced in the House of Representatives on Saturday, we find no provision for commuting any of the stamp taxes which it imposes. Every check, every telegraphic dispatch, every bond, and every other instrument or document liable to the tax, must have the stamp for it actually affixed and cancelled.

How great and vexatious an amount of labor will thus be imposed upon our citizens seems never to have occurred to the committee which prepared the bill. The stamp of 2 cents each on checks, in force during the late war, produced, in some years, nearly \$3,000,000 a year, so that 150,000,000 separate stamps were used in collecting it. The tax on telegraphic messages now proposed is 1 cent on 25 cent messages and 2 cents for messages costing more than 25 cents. The Western Union Telegraph Company alone collects from the public \$22,000,000 yearly for telegraphic service, which, at an average of 80 cents for each message, makes 44,000,000 messages, every one of which will have to be stamped separately. The New York Central Railroad Company is about to issue 100,000 mortgage bonds and 120,000 debentures, the Lake Shore Railway Company 50,000 mortgage bonds, the Chicago and Rock Island, the Chicago and North-western 100,000 more, each of which will require the stamp of \$1, provided for in the bill. As for the stock certificates, contracts, deeds, policies of insurance, and other instruments affected by the bill, their number is not to be computed.

Great Britain, which has had a long and valuable experience in taxation, provides that certain stamp taxes may be commuted by the payment of a lump sum, called a composition. Thus, a municipal corporation, about to issue bonds, arranges with the Stamp Office to commute the stamp tax for the whole amount at once, and thus escapes the annoyance of affixing and cancelling a separate stamp on each bond. A similar plan ought to be adopted here. The Government would lose nothing by it, and would save a great deal, while the citizen would be spared much trouble. Banks could pay the check stamp and collect it from the makers of the checks. Railroad corporations would pay no less if they paid \$100,000 at once upon a \$100,000,000 bond issue than if they paid for each \$1,000 bond \$1 separately. The principle might be extended in the same way to checks, to telegraphic messages and to all other papers and instruments made by responsible corporations. Stamp taxes are vexatious at best, and they should be made as little so as possible.

The Rights of Neutrals.

It is natural that neutral maritime nations should be somewhat concerned as to how their carrying trade will be affected by the war between the United States and Spain, since neither of these two countries is bound by the famous Declaration of Paris, which was drawn up with reference to these rights.

Practically, however, there has never been much ground for anxiety regarding the policy of the United States. Our country has from its foundation been one of the most conspicuous and advanced of the champions of neutral rights as against belligerents. Shortly after our Government was founded the French revolution broke out, and thereafter, until the downfall of Napoleon, Europe was almost constantly embroiled in war. Thus during the first quarter of a century of our Government's existence its maritime rights as a neutral became of high importance, and the strong ground it then took in favor of such rights has never been abandoned. Accordingly it has been obvious that our uniform policy for a century would make us respect to the utmost the rights of neutrals during our coming attitude as a belligerent, and further that Spain would be forced to do the same thing from the desire not to offend her European neighbors in her hard task.

But Secretary Sherman has not been satisfied to leave the matter so. He has gone further, and has announced that it is the policy of our country to accept the articles of the Declaration of Paris for the present war with Spain. He does not, indeed, mention that agreement of April 16, 1856, by name; but we need only turn aside by the four statements of his proclamation, issued on Wednesday, and the four of the international declaration of forty-two years ago to see that they are virtually identical.

The Paris declaration begins by saying that "privateering is and remains abolished," and Secretary Sherman thinks that "it will be the policy of this Government not to resort to privateering" during the war with Spain. "Our rights to privateer are reserved for the future, but practically neutrals may feel assured that we shall not assert them now. Next, the Declaration of Paris is that "the neutral flag covers enemy's goods, with the exception of contraband of war," and this our Department of State repeats without the change of a letter. Thirdly, the declaration of 1856 holds that neutral goods, except contraband of war, are not liable to capture and confiscation under the enemy's flag, and that is also what Mr. Sherman announces. Finally, the Paris declaration that "blockades, in order to be

binding, must be effective," is adopted in exact words by our State Department.

But all this is no new ground for us. We have repeatedly been found acting on the principles we proclaim now. It is true that we have always held that a belligerent has the right, if he chooses to exercise it, and in the absence of an agreement to the contrary, to take an enemy's goods from a neutral ship on the high seas. We have also insisted and still insist on the right to privateer, and Congress might even exercise it in this war. On the other hand, we have held that neutral goods do not become subject to capture merely from being found on a belligerent's ship. When we were asked to accede to the Declaration of Paris, our refusal was based not on the ground that it went too far in the protection of neutral property, but that it did not go far enough. Secretary Marcy's proposal, in which the other powers refused to concur, exempted private property altogether from capture at sea, and when this was not accepted we did not adhere to the other agreements relating to neutral goods and flags.

That proposed amendment of total immunity for private property was renewed by Secretary Seward at the outbreak of the civil war, but Great Britain and France refused, wishing to make special provisions regarding that war. Then Mr. Seward notified our representatives abroad that we would act in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Paris anyway, except the one against privateering, and practically we did not violate that. Our navy received its instructions accordingly, and it is said that no case occurred of the condemnation as prize of any goods under the second and third articles of the Declaration of Paris, touching an enemy's goods under a neutral flag, or neutral goods under an enemy's flag. As to the immunity of an enemy's goods under a neutral flag our views have been reaffirmed since the civil war in treaties with various countries.

It remains to be noted that the statement of Secretary Sherman in regard to privateering seems to have been only prefatory to his specific and numbered announcements as to the three remaining points. This was necessary, because Congress has the power, under the Constitution, to grant letters of marque and reprisal, and could do so, of course, in the present war with Spain. In 1863 Congress passed a law authorizing the President to issue letters of marque and reprisal, but I was never put into execution.

Neutral nations cannot fail, we think, to be gratified by our voluntary adhesion to the principles of the Declaration of Paris, while Spain, which, like our own country, was not a co-signatory of that agreement, has now found her hand forced regarding that important question.

A Party of Sociologists.

Under the guidance of a Professor in Yale University, a queer expedition of discovery discovered this town last week. The exploring expedition consisted of thirty Yale "theologues," who are also students of that branch of science or sociology to which the mongrel name "sociology" has been given.

In the American colleges at present "sociology" seems not to mean the science of social phenomena in general, but a cursory inquiry into and sentimental generalization about the condition of "the poor." From an American professor of "sociology" we do not expect facts so much as hysterical rhetoric. He takes a bird's-eye view of "the slums," or he goes and lives among them for a time, much wondered at and scorned by the natives. Then he produces his magazine article, essay, or book. He is usually an imperfect literary character, hopelessly unscientific, but firmly persuaded of the profundity of his researches and the accuracy of his conclusions. He may be compared as to his scientific pretensions to an honest clairvoyant, astrologer, or dream book writer. He is able to do more harm than most writers of a good deal of his labor and vocabulary to the task of making "the poor" believe that they are "wronged" somehow or other by "the rich." He has strayed away from "sociology" proper, and has become a sentimental slummer. As a writer he is a sentimental slummer.

In the head of this Yale Divinity School exploring party and sociological slumming expedition, for we are sorry not to have known before last week his undoubtedly venerable name. The route followed by his young LIVINGSTONES and STANLEYS, however, seems to show that his notion of "social economics," whatever that may be, is that of the sentimental slummer.

Here were thirty meek and wondering divinity students, of the type which New Haven knows so well, worthy and innocent young men, whom a heartless undergraduate once described as "combining all the virtues with the habit of playing tennis in late and patent leather shoes." The thirty came, like Lord BATEMAN, strange countries for to see. But Lord BATEMAN was not a sociologist. He would not have thought it necessary to visit the Mills Hotel in Bleeker street. Thither the thirty were taken, and there they slept Thursday night, probably with a delightful sense of having sunk a deep shaft into the nether world. The next morning they "jotted down their impressions." We wonder if the Hon. GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN addressed the discoverers. He could have told them that the Mills in the Waldorf-Astoria of cheap hotels, and no proper point for beginning a journey into sentimental social economics. The important thing to remember, however, is that the discoverers jotted down their impressions. Expect thirty, or counting the professor in command, thirty-one magazine articles, essays, and books on "The Seamy Side of New York," or Life Among the Lowly." By interviewing Mr. CHANCERY M. DEWEY, one of the strugglers who have died at the Mills Hotel, the thirty might have found some anecdotes to add to their memoranda.

From Bleeker street the explorers went to the University Settlement and the College Settlement, institutions replete with sociology and sociologists. It would have saved car fare to have taken them to Good Government Club C and to the reform boudoirs of the Citizens' Union. Those light-houses of thought have sociology to burn. Denounce the names of the thirty are to be found on the Low petitions. If those priceless documents have been preserved. At any rate we must decline to believe that the Mills Hotel is more educational and sociological than Good Government Club C. What is cheap soup by the side of free reform and plenty of it?

At noon on Friday the explorers called on the Mayor. They must have surprised him. The local pathfinder detailed to accompany the expedition asked the Mayor "to address the students on the subject of the public in litigation." Either on account

of an unfortunate bias against sociology or because he was busy, the Mayor unfeelingly "informed the delegation that he was not there to lecture, but to administer the affairs of his office." This is a short-sighted view. If the sociologist candidate for Mayor had been elected last November, he would have been only too happy to lecture on sociology to visiting sociologists.

Later in the day the explorers visited Hartley House in West Forty-sixth street, and in the evening they went to a "symposium of charity workers." Among their other wanderings Friday or Saturday was an incursion into the Elizabeth street police station and into the Chinese quarter, and a walk in East Broadway. Apparently the sociologists regarded East Broadway as a mysterious region, inhabited by a savage race. Probably East Broadway regarded them as some new ambulatory sort of a Good Government Club.

We hope that the excellent young theologians from New Haven will not make their personally conducted tour the subject of too much literature or be inspired by it to devote themselves to lives of sociology. The temptation is great. Sentimental sociology appears to be fascinating to its students and professors. It is easy work, for one thing, and it has a philanthropic complexion that attracts ingenuous youth. But the profession is getting crowded.

Troops for the Field.

A letter from a citizen, elsewhere published, makes with regard to the raising of volunteer troops for the war suggestions which might be well enough if they were not based on a total misunderstanding of the real conditions.

He assumes that the war will be short; but that is a wholly unsafe and unjustifiable assumption. The duration of the war cannot be foreseen. If Congress had been as sure as he is that an easy victory for the American arms will come speedily, it would not have provided for the calling out of a large volunteer force, for the additional troops would be needless, more especially as it is likely to be months before they are fully trained for service. Our friends "believers" one way, but evidently the President is of a different mind. He would not call for volunteers if he was not convinced that as a measure of safety we must get ready for the possible contingency of a war much longer than the brief conflict our correspondent expects so confidently.

Our friend is wrong in his "belief" that "the National Guard will fill the requisition of 100,000 men, drilled, disciplined men, ready for immediate field duty." The National Guard, as every man of military judgment and experience knows, will be ready for field service only after months of training at Chickamauga or some other camp. If our friend reads the history of the war of 1812, the Mexican war, and the civil war, he will find that this judgment is supported by the experience with the militia in them all. Gen. SCOTT spent five or six months in getting his troops ready for the Mexican war. After Bull Run we had to stop long in order to create an army. We must be sure before we go ahead. The way to make a war short is to go into it prepared abundantly for a long war.

Our friend's final suggestion that men should be enlisted "provisionally" for nine months and drilled during that time in the vacated National Guard armories, so that they might be ready for volunteering at the end of that time if they should chance to be needed, is not valuable practically. If enlistments are not for the war, and its duration is prolonged, there may come a time when it will be practically impossible to get volunteers. The President is wise in fixing the term of enlistment so long as two years, slight as it is in the probability that the war will continue during more than half of that period, even if it is not over in a few months. Any provisional enlistments would be totally un military. Drilling in armories can perfect men in the school of the soldier, but they must be sent into camp and dissociated wholly from civil life and its ties before they can be made into soldiers fit for efficient service on the field of war.

Our Loving Friend in London.

Those Americans who read the *Saturday Review* are familiar with the tone of accurate information and admirable temper which distinguishes all its discussions of our affairs. Here we have it again in an article of fine discernment entitled, "America, the Bully."

President McKinley is a "feeble" creature who "ostentatiously washes his hands of the blood that is to be shed." The present war is "based solely on the fact that Spain has failed, during two years, in reducing Cuban insurgents, owing to their being liberally supplied with money and munitions of war from the United States." The fighting in Cuba "has been financed and engineered from American soil for the purpose of enriching a New York syndicate, who, having got hold of a big thing in Cuban real estate, are operating for a rise." And this country "may find before the summer is out that in starting a war of aggression against Spain she has been guilty not only of a crime against humanity, but also of a stupendous national blunder."

It seems almost ungrateful to point out a minor error or two in an article like "America, the Bully"; but the *Saturday Review* ought to be made aware that Mr. GODKIN of the *Evening Post* has never been convicted and sentenced for veracity in the first degree, and that Mr. JOSEPH PULITZER, whom it describes as "that most patriotic of Polish Jews," is a Magyar.

The Georgia Populists have held one State convention this spring, and they are going to hold another in May. The calling of the second convention is attributed by persons unfamiliar with Populist habits to the regrettable refusal of the Hon. TOM WATSON, the celebrated "historian" of France, to let his name go to the pillar of fire for the faithful. Mistake. The Georgia Populists, and all other Populists in good and regular standing, hold State conventions as often as possible, and never less frequently than once a month. They find the practice stimulating to the vocal circulation, even if somewhat injurious to the crops, but the worse the crops the better for Populism. When the Populist millennium comes there will be two State conventions a day and one in the evening in every State.

Loud explosions of emotion in the editorial shrine of our esteemed contemporary, the *Springfield Union*. "The question as to the right way for men to part their hair," cries that esteemed contemporary, "is one that bids fair to become a vital one within the next few years, and may eventually become a potent force in politics." Perhaps the hair of his readers will be the utterance of a personal gripe or misfortune, the story of a heart broken on account of hair. We have not heard that the parting of the hair has been a municipal question in Springfield, but it is well may be the vivification of the *Union's* editor.

COAL IS CONTRABAND OF WAR.

The General Intercourse favorable to the coal and contraband of war.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN:—I see by the SUN of April 23 that Mr. Balfour, in the House of Commons, referring to a question of Michael Davitt, said that the Government could not lay it down as a principle that coal was contraband of war, because it was an indispensable portion of the fighting equipment of modern warships. He had no doubt that coal would very frequently be contraband of war, but it should not be so understood under all circumstances.

This statement, taken in connection with the previous reports that the British Government had instructed the colonial authorities in the West Indies not to allow the sale of coal to the Spanish agents, seems to indicate that Great Britain will enforce the doctrine that it has always maintained, and that is founded on sound principles, namely, that the status of an article which may be innocent or noxious according to the use to which it is put is determined by the circumstances attending its shipment. When it is presumably to be used for belligerent purposes it is contraband, but when the presumption is in favor of its use for commercial or industrial purposes it is not contraband.

In the present case, where Spain will have an imperative need for coal for the warships she may send to the West Indies to fight the United States, to furnish it to her agents would be as much a breach of neutrality as to furnish them with munitions and gunpowder.

One of the grounds upon which the United States claims indemnity of England for our losses by the Confederate cruisers in our civil war was that she had allowed them to supply themselves with coal for the purpose of cruising against our commerce. And although the award of the Geneva tribunal does not in terms hold England responsible for the damages inflicted by these cruisers solely in consequence of these supplies, yet from the opinions of the arbitrators it seems that this was one element of consideration in making up their verdict. One of them, Count Solopis, said:

"I will not say that the simple fact of having allowed a greater amount of coal than was necessary for the ordinary needs of the civil war to be supplied to the Confederate cruisers, or to call for an indemnity. But if an excessive supply of coal is connected with other circumstances which show that it was used as a veritable *res hostilis*, then it is an infraction of the second article of the treaty."

Great Britain evidently does not propose to give us any such ground of complaint in our present war with Spain. Chancellor Kent, in his commentaries, discussing the subject of contraband, remarks:

"It is the *usus belli* which determines an article to be contraband, and as articles come into use as contraband of war which were before innocent, there is truth in the remark that the law of nations shifts from time to time, the law of nations shifts with them, not indeed by the change of principles, but by the change in the application of them to new cases, and in order to meet the varying inventions of war."

This is especially true of coal, and Kent may have had it in mind when he wrote Mr. Hall, in his treatise on international law, says:

"Coal, owing to the lateness of the date at which it has become of importance in war, is the subject of a very limited usage. In 1809 and 1870 France declared it to be contraband, and, according to M. Calvo, the greater number of the secondary States have followed her in the like service. England, on the other hand, during the war of 1870, considered that the character of coal should be determined by its destination, and though she refused to class it as a general rule with contraband merchandise, she prohibited from sailing from her ports English ports with supplies directly consigned to the French fleet in the North Sea. Germany went further and remonstrated strongly against its export to France being permitted by the English Government. The claim was extravagant, but the nation would not be so easily deterred from its course. English ports with supplies directly consigned to the French fleet in the North Sea. 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